

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) An inquiry processing apparatus comprising:

a first providing unit configured to provide hierarchically arranged web pages to a browser terminal via a network, the web pages including an inquiry page for entering an inquiry and content pages;

5 a recording unit configured to record therein a history of the provision of content pages to the browser terminal, the history including provided-page information indicating content pages having been provided to the browser terminal and provided-level information indicating a hierarchical level of each of the provided content pages;

10 a receiving unit configured to receive an inquiry entered into the inquiry page via the browser terminal;

a judging unit configured to judge, when the inquiry is received, whether any content page of a lowest hierarchical level has been provided to the browser terminal, based on the provided-page information and the provided-level information included in the history of the provision of content pages; and

15 a second providing unit configured to provide a page containing the received inquiry and a result of the judgment to a responder terminal used by a responder for responding to the inquiry, the responder terminal being different from the browser terminal.

2. (Previously Presented) The inquiry processing apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising:

a checking unit configured to check, each time a content page is provided to the browser terminal, whether the content page is of the lowest hierarchical level, wherein

5 the recording unit is configured to record a result of the checking as the history.

3. (Previously Presented) An inquiry processing method for use by an electronic catalog presenting apparatus comprising:

a first providing step of providing hierarchically arranged web pages to a browser terminal via a network, the web pages including an inquiry page for entering an inquiry and
5 content pages;

a recording step of recording therein a history of the provision of content pages to the browser terminal, the history including provided-page information indicating content pages having been provided to the browser terminal and provided-level information indicating a hierarchical level of each of the provided content pages;

10 a receiving step of receiving an inquiry entered into the inquiry page via the browser terminal;

a judging step of judging, when the inquiry is received, whether any content page of a lowest hierarchical level has been provided to the browser terminal, based on the provided-page information and the provided-level information included in the history of the provision of
15 content pages; and

a second providing step of providing a page containing the received inquiry and a result of the judgment to a responder terminal used by a responder for responding to the inquiry, the responder terminal being different from the browser terminal.

4.-5. (Cancelled)

6. (Previously Presented) The inquiry processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the judging unit is configured to provide a negative judgment if no content page of the lowest hierarchical level has been provided to the browser terminal.

7. (Previously Presented) The inquiry processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the judging unit is configured to provide a positive judgment if at least one content page of the lowest hierarchical level has been provided to the browser terminal.

8. (Previously Presented) The inquiry processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the responder terminal is configured to display the result of the judgment.

9. (Previously Presented) The inquiry processing apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising a database configured to store the result of the judgment.

10. (Previously Presented) The inquiry processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the responder terminal is configured to display the history of the provision of content pages to the browser terminal.

11.-13. (Cancelled)

14. (New) An inquiry processing apparatus comprising:

a first providing unit configured to provide hierarchically arranged web pages to a browser terminal via a network, the web pages including an inquiry page for entering an inquiry and content pages;

5 a recording unit configured to record therein a history of the provision of content pages to the browser terminal, the history including provided-page information indicating content pages having been provided to the browser terminal and provided-level information indicating a hierarchical level of each of the provided content pages;

10 a receiving unit configured to receive an inquiry entered into the inquiry page via the browser terminal;

means for automatically judging, when the inquiry is received, whether any content page of a lowest hierarchical level has been provided to the browser terminal, based on the provided-page information and the provided-level information included in the history of the provision of content pages; and

15 a second providing unit configured to provide a page containing the received inquiry and a result of the judgment to a responder terminal used by a responder for responding to the inquiry, the responder terminal being different from the browser terminal.

15. (New) The inquiry processing apparatus according to Claim 14, further comprising:

means for selecting an inquiry page to provide to the browser terminal from a plurality of inquiry pages based on the history of the provision of content pages to the browser

5 terminal.